

CHILDREN'S AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL

TUESDAY 4 JUNE, 2013 AT 6.00 P.M. AT THE COUNCIL HOUSE

Panel Members Present	Councillor B. Cassidy (Chair) Councillor D. Shires Councillor P. Lane Councillor T. Jukes Councillor E. Hughes
Non elected non-voting members present	S. Rayner (Lichfield Diocesan Education) R. Bragger (Primary Teacher representative)
Portfolio holder present	Councillor R. Andrew - Children's Services
Officers Present	Rose Collinson - Interim Executive Director, Children's Services; Sue Butcher - Interim Assistant Director, Specialist Services Neil Picken – Senior Committee Business and Governance Manager

303/13 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors R. Martin and G. Perry.

304/13 SUBSTITUTIONS

There were no substitutions.

305/13 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of interest or party whip identified at this meeting.

306/13 MINUTES

Members considered the minutes of the meeting held on 16 May, 2013

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 16 May, 2013, a copy having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.

307/13 WORK PROGRAMME 2013/14

The Chair welcomed all Members and Officers to the meeting. She emphasised that Scrutiny was an essential part of the improvement process within Children's Services

and highlighted that the Panel had a challenging year ahead. Many areas require scrutiny including the education service which had returned to the Council having previously been contracted to Serco.

The Chair reflected on the improvement process to date and noted that improvements had been made within safeguarding and looked after children such as the new Multi Agency Screening Team in the Initial Response Service. It was also acknowledged that senior managers had identified areas which required further improvement and were clear on how to improve services further. The chair commented that, whilst this was encouraging there remained a not insignificant amount of work to do to achieve overall service improvements.

A member reflected on Sandwell Council which had recently received the lowest rating following an Ofsted inspection. Members were advised that Walsall now had a spirit of openness and a good management oversight of services. In terms of Scrutiny, members needed to ensure that they were aware of the framework and what 'good' children's services looked like.

The interim Executive Director (Children's Services) advised that the Department for Education are carrying out a six month review of progress on 28th June with a further review six months later. It was suggested that the findings of the review in June, 2013 be considered by the Panel at its meeting to be held in July, 2013.

Phase one of the improvement plan was nearing a close and phase two would commence thereafter. The importance of phase two was emphasised as was the need for scrutiny to continue to question progress, the impact it was having and management decisions being taken. Officers stated that there were no quick wins as cultural and structural changes required time to become embedded into practice.

The Chair reminded all members that training sessions had been scheduled - three sessions specifically for Panel members and a further three for all members of the Council. All sessions would focus on safeguarding, looked after children and the role of members as corporate parents.

It was anticipated that, as a result of undertaking the training, there would be a clear view as to which areas the Panel would consider during 2013/14. It was also stated the use of working groups could be explored further, such as establishing a group specifically to focus on performance data.

In light of the discussion regarding training, it was suggested that Members defer consideration of the work programme until the meeting in July, 2013. This would enable members to take into consideration items raised within the report [annexed] together with the knowledge gained from the training sessions to develop a balanced work programme which concentrated on key areas of Children's services.

Further discussion was held in relation to the school improvement strategy and members agreed that this should be considered during the 2013/14 municipal year.

Prior to conclusion of the item, the Chair advised that the meeting scheduled to be held on 11 July, 2013 had been changed to 17th July, 2013. A special meeting had also been arranged to be held on 20 August, 2013 to receive an update on the recommendations of the Safeguarding Working Group.

In relation to venues, it was suggested that Children's and Young People Scrutiny Panel meetings could be held in external venues, such as the community room at Bluebells, the new purpose built provision providing short term breaks for children with disabilities, and that engaging parents and children should also be explored further.

Resolved

- 1) That consideration of the work programme be considered at the Panel meeting due to take place on 17 July, 2013;
- 2) That the clerk, in consultation with the Chair, give consideration as to the location of future meetings;
- 3) That the school improvement strategy be considered further when agreeing the work programme at the Panel meeting in July, 2013
- 4) That members note that the date of the July meeting had changed and would take place on 17 July, 2013;
- 5) That members note that a special meeting would be held on 20 August, 2013.

308/13 FORWARD PLAN

Members considered the forward plan [annexed].

Members discussed item 25/13 - Enlargement of Phoenix Special School and requested a briefing note.

Members discussed item 24/13 – Commissioning short break services for children with a disability and requested that a briefing note be produced and that an item on this matter be included within the agenda for the meeting scheduled to take place on 20th August, 2013.

Members discussed item 23.3 – Commissioning provision of early help services (including child care) through children's centres and requested that this be considered for inclusion within a working group remit during the 2013/14 municipal year.

Members discussed item 22/13 – Adults services and special education needs transport noting that this would be delegated to the Director of Children's Services and Director of Adults Services, in consultation with the portfolio holders, power to oversee and OJEU procurement process and enter into a series of new transport contracts. Members commented that the forward plan did not specify that Children's portfolio was involved in column 6 (contact member) and that this should be rectified. It was suggested that this item be considered for inclusion within the Panels work programme when discussed at the Panel meeting to be held on 17th July, 2013.

Resolved

- 1) That a briefing note in respect of item 25/13 – enlargement of Phoenix Special School, be circulated;
- 2) That a briefing note in respect of item 24/13 – Commissioning short break services for children with a disability, be circulated and that an item be placed on the agenda for the Panel's meeting in August, 2013;

- 3) That commissioning provision of early help services (including child care) through children's centres be considered as a potential working group when the Panel agrees its work programme for 2013/14;
- 4) That item 22/13 – Adults services and special education needs transport be considered for inclusion within the Panels work programme when discussed at the Panel meeting to be held on 17th July, 2013.

309/13 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting was noted as 17 July, 2013 at 6.00 p.m.

The meeting terminated at 7.00 p.m.

Chair:

Date: